the Bridge

NEWSLETTER of the BRITISH COLUMBIA
FIRST NATIONS FORESTRY PROGRAM

Left to Right: Art Shortreid, Elaine Teske, Nello Cataldo, Randy Butcher of Canadian Forest Service

New Program Focus of Newsletter

Welcome to the premiere edition of The Bridge, newsletter of The British Columbia First Nations Forestry Program. Our focus is on the people and projects of this new program.

On April 16, 1996 the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development (DIAND) and the Minister of Natural Resources Canada - Canadian Forest Service (CFS) announced a new First Nations Forestry Program. Jointly funded and administered by the two departments, the program promotes the active involvement of First Nations in forestry.

This is a national program designed to increase First Nations capacity in forest resource management including related business sectors. It is administered by a national management committee, comprised of representatives from the two departments, which provides overall broad direction to the program. The

Premiere Edition

Canada

MARCH 1997

New Program ...from page 1

management and delivery of the program in each province or territory is the responsibility of provincial and territorial management committees comprised of representatives from First Nations, DIAND, CFS, and other agencies and organizations who can contribute to the objectives of the program. These committees develop policies, standards and procedures, communications strategies, work plans and other program elements for their respective province or territory.

In British Columbia, the management committee is composed of 12 members representing First Nations, CFS, DIAND, B.C. Ministry of Forests, and industry. The Board has 6 representatives from First Nations communities, 3 representatives from businesses operated by native people, and one representative from each of the government agencies.

The FNFP Management Board is responsible for the overall direction of the program in British Columbia, setting policy and reviewing and approving project proposals. The Management Board is the final authority concerning projects and the program. This issue of The Bridge is designed to introduce you to the people who serve on the Board.

The First Nations Forestry Program was developed to improve economic conditions in status First Nations communities and to assist First Nations with building their capacity to manage forest resources. It has a three year term ending March 31, 1999 with a possibility of a two year extension provided there has been evidence of success and provided that funding is available.

The program is not just about forest management on reserve land, but about economic development, and the enhancement of First Nations abilities to manage forest resource activities throughout British Columbia. The development of First Nations business partnerships both on and off reserves is promoted, as well as with government and non-government organizations and the forest industry.

The Bridge is designed to keep you posted on the success of the program, its projects and its partnerships. We hope you find it of interest and value.

Nello Cataldo
Program Manager

B.C. First Nations Forestry Program Management Board

Organization	Agency	Member /Alternate
Federal Government	Canadian Forest Service, Victoria	Elaine Teske / Nello Cataldo
	Indian Affairs and Northern Development, Vancouver	Ada Tuck / Bob Hart
Provincial Government	Ministry of Forests, Vancouver	Barbara Gray-Wiksten
First Nations	Neskonlith Indian Band Chase, BC	Chief Art Manuel / Richard Manuel
	Westbank Indian Band Kelowna, BC	Harold Derickson / Clarence Clough
	Kispiox Indian Band Hazelton, BC	Chief Brian Williams / Linda Peterson
	Osoyoos Indian Band Osoyoos, BC	Chief Clarence Louie / Roger Hall
	University of British Columbia	Gordon Prest / Cliff Grant
	North Thompson Indian Band, Kamloops, BC	Chief Nathan Matthew
Industry	Hecate Logging Co. Ltd. President	Earl Smith
	Tanizul Timber Ltd. Fort St. James, BC	Thomas Pierre / Elwood Quewezance
	First Canadian Alliance Ltd. Vancouver, BC	Peter Alexcee

First Nations Forestry Program Enhances Opportunities

For the First Nations community of British Columbia the forests have always been important culturally. But as the forests of the province have become industrialized that cultural value has rarely translated into economic prosperity for aboriginal communities.

Helping redress that disparity is the First Nations Forestry Program (FNFP) which enhances opportunities for First Nations throughout Canada to participate in forest economic development on and off reserve.

"Natural resource and land based activity may hold the key to the economic future of many First Nations," Elaine Teske, of the Canadian Forest Service Pacific Forestry Centre says. As the British Columbia FNFP board co-chair she hopes the program can offer First Nations not only the opportunity to develop their forestry skills, but also their business skills. "So they can truly become full partners with industry and government in any future forestry opportunities."

And opportunity is what is needed by First Nations communities seeking to improve their standard of living and become independent of the government economically, says Harold Derickson, fellow B.C. co-chair of the FNFP and member of the Westbank Indian Band.

"It is difficult for the First Nations to move ahead when a lot of them are disadvantaged economically in comparison to mainstream society," says Derickson, a long time native politician and forestry activist. But with the FNFP, he sees hope that First Nations can advance to a position where they are a much stronger economic player in the forest industry.

"It's not going to be the end-all and be-all for all First Nations," he concedes. "But I am sure with good strong leadership from the FNFP management board and focus on First Nations concerns it can happen and do what it set out to do for aboriginal people."

Harold Derickson

A sentiment echoed by DIAND board member Ada Tuck who stresses it is the First Nations representatives -- nine of 12 board members are drawn from the First Nations community -- themselves that are laying the direction for the program.

"They are active partners making major funding and program decisions," Tuck says. "The First Nations board members really have a clear idea of the bigger picture and are looking for good business proposals."

Proposals that are to be the seeds of a First Nations forestry industry. An industry that in fruition it is hoped may lead to First Nations economic independence.

Aiming for Success

TFL Signing,AUgust 15, 1996
Left to right: Bob Bird – Canwood Furniture, Chief Clarence Louie – Osoyoos, Bob Taylor – Weyerhaeuser, Chief Richard Knott – Spallumcheen

It has long been a criticism from First Nations communities that not enough of the dollars allocated for First Nations programs actually reach the targeted communities and peoples. The complaint is that the money ends up in the pockets of non-native consultants and businesses who are brought in to meet the requirements of programs anemic from lack of native input.

"The dollars that government puts out are suppose to be for Indian people, but when those programs are developed they are so restrictive and don't take in to account cultural differences, that when they reach the band level 99 per cent of those dollars end up going to non-Indians," Chief Clarence Louie of the Osoyoos Indian Band argues. As chief for 10 years, Louie has experienced the failure of programs. He also knows what it takes to make a program succeed and brings that vision to his chair on the First Nations Forestry Program board in British Columbia.

"One of my major concerns is that these First Nations dollars get down to First Nations communities and the First Nations communities define who they feel should be hired under those programs," Louie says.

Established in 1996, the FNTP was developed to enhance economic opportunities for First Nations in the forestry industry. Through financial and technical assistance, the program provides First Nations with the skills and tools needed to operate and participate in forest-based business across Canada. In B.C. its 12 person board has a dominating nine member First Nations presence that program officials say is essential to the vision of the FNFP.

"I think it is an evolving of the process of program management and it is exactly where is should be going. We need to have people making decisions for their community," Barbara Gray-Wiksten, of the Aboriginal Affairs Branch of the B.C. Ministry of Forest, says. And as the provincial representative on the B.C. FNTP board, Gray-Wiksten sees the structure of the board endorsing that community led direction.

And success of the FNTP will make it a model for other programs, says Gray-Wiksten's federal government counterpart on the board, Ada Tuck of the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development. "The thing that has really impressed me is that it is the First Nations representatives themselves that are really laying the direction and making the considered decisions for the program," Tuck says. "I think that this is a real departure from the way business was done before and I certainly hope it sets a precedent for the future."

New Business

In British Columbia, forests are big business, with one-quarter of the provincial economy based on forestry revenue. For First Nations communities -- who harvest less than three-quarters of one-percent of the annual allowable cut in B.C. -- that business has represented largely untapped opportunity, until now.

Under the First Nations Forestry Program, First Nations communities are being encouraged to operate and participate in the forest industry. Providing financial and technical assistance to First Nations, the program ensures that they have the tools needed to operate and participate in forest based business.

"This program is orientated to entrepreneurs, business development, and capacity building and is not limited to on-reserve land," says Elaine Teske, director of marketing and operations at the Pacific Forestry Centre and FNFP B.C. co-chair. Which makes it an fundamental shift from previous silviculture focused programs.

That new business focus is being met enthusiastically by First Nations communities and their representatives on the program board. "I really like the focus of the FNFP, in terms of focusing on business opportunities and helping the entrepreneur get his start in the industry," Chief Arthur Manuel of the Neskonlith Band, says. Fellow board member, Earl Smith, President of Hecate Logging in Black Creek, agrees business development is the key to the future of First Nations communities. Involved in forestry "all of his life," Smith says it "would be great if we could hone in on developing the skills of the people to do the work that has to be done." And he sees the FNFP going far to filling the business-skills gap that exists in aboriginal communities.

With one term as chief behind him, Manuel agrees entrepreneurial forestry has potential as a major economic driver for First Nations communities and says that filling that skills gap would take First Nations one step closer to regaining their self-sufficiency.

"The social effects, I believe, will be a greater self confidence within the community and freedom for the community to develop more positively," Manuel says. "We were a very strong, independent people before. We took care of our own families and relied upon the very bush and forest that we are now talking about wanting to be involved in again, in terms of harvesting and good forest husbandry."

Through forest-based business development, facilitated by the FNFP, Manuel hopes First Nations can become masters of their own households again.

New Direction

Though First Nations involvement in the business of forestry may be in its infant stage, First Nations involvement in the labour of forestry has a long pedigree.

Whether as fallers bringing the wood down to earth or more recently as silviculturists putting the seeds of the future to ground, aboriginal people have worked in the woods.

But it was with the sweat of brows that such livings were made and rarely was there an opportunity to reach beyond a career on the forest floor.

"We have a lot of young able bodied men that know the skills in terms of falling trees, silviculture, brushing and pruning," Chief Arthur Manuel of the Neskonlith Band says. But those opportunities are too limiting for First Nations communities who want to rise to a level of independence. And though past programs have trained members of First Nations communities in the modern technical aspects of silviculture, what is need is a shift away from the bare technical skills of the forest and a concentration on the skills of the business of forestry, Manuel says and as a member of the First Nations Forestry Program (FNFP) board he is pushing to make that happen. As is Elwood Quewezance, silviculture supervisor for the only native owned tree farm licence in Canada, Tanizul Timber Ltd. Introduced to forestry under a previous government program, Quewezance was trained as a forest technician at the College of New Caledonia in Prince George, but considers business skills to be just as valuable as the lessons of on the ground forestry.

"We need to open First Nations people's eyes to the business side of forestry," Quewezance, who sits on the FNFP board in British Columbia, says.

Focus on the field

"We are very interested in the forest sector and I optimistically think that there is a lot of opportunity out there if there is enough government support to get Indian people up to speed." Manuel says.

First Nations communities have discovered it is not enough to be the laborers in the forestry industrial cycle and must take control of the resources in and around their communities by becoming players in the business side of the industry.

"There is a need in First Nations Communities to participate fully, from management to employment," Chief Nathan Matthew of the North Thompson Band, says. Sitting on the FNFP board, Matthew argues that it is common sense that First Nations evolve beyond the level of forest laborers into that of forest entrepreneurs.

"So much in our part of the world is dependent upon forest resources and we should be in there accessing the benefits in the forestry sector."

Developing Off Reserve Partnerships

First hand experience

First Nations are the first to say they do not want to be dependent on government funding for programs and prosperity. But faced with a limited on-reserve land base and inadequate capitalization, most First Nations communities do not have the resources for independent entrance into the forest industry. That is a fact which presents a challenge for any program aimed at enhancing First Nations forest industry participation.

Under the First Nations Forestry Program, the solution for limited resources is the encouragement of off-reserve partnerships with industry and government.

"We are encouraging First Nations to look at other avenues for funding and resource opportunities," Elaine Teske, co-chair of the British Columbia FNFP board and director of Marketing and Operations for the Canadian Forest Service (CFS) at the Pacific Forestry Centre, says. That sentiment is shared by her fellow co-chair, Harold Derickson of the Westbank Indian Band. Recognizing the growing limitations of government funding and the need to develop projects that will be self-perpetuating, Derickson says First Nations endeavors into forestry must not be solely government dependent.

"If you look at a lot of government programs, with downsizing and the shortage of available dollars, we are all

Gordon Prest

faced with trying to pull resources and must dovetail the limited government dollars we have with other sources," Derickson argues. And those other sources includes off-reserve business partnerships with forestry industry mainstays who are increasingly open to joining forces with First Nations people.

For Gordon Prest, FNFP board member and First Nations coordinator at the University of British Columbia's Faculty of Forestry, forming off-reserve partnerships is not only a solution to limited resources, it is also a learning opportunity for those that wish to develop First Nations forest-based business.

"Developing the connections with off-reserve resources and business is a very positive step. The land-base that First Nations have today is totally unrealistic for creating an economic base for First Nations forestry. So, we have to develop partnerships off-reserve that will accelerate the process," Prest says. Such partnerships also expose First Nations communities to the extensive business and technical experience already in place in the B.C. forest industry. Prest considers that there is little point in developing business if First Nations communities don't have qualified people to take on the roles in business development. So in the long term those communities have to ensure, through training and off-reserve partnerships, they have people qualified to take on those rolls as First Nations involvement increases.

"This program is an excellent bridge," Prest says. "The FNFP is allowing the First Nations to step off the reserve and develop those kind of partnerships."

Projects Set Program Framework

Expert advice

Faced with an overwhelming initial response, the Management Board of the First Nations Forestry Program (FNFP) has begun establishing the initiative in British Columbia with 43 First Nations forest industry projects approved for 1996/97.

"This first group of proposals was basically setting the framework," Elwood Quewezance, of Tanizul Timber Ltd, says. As a FNFP Management Board member, Quewezance looked for business acumen and practical experience when sifting through the 139 proposals worth $15.5-million presented to the board.

"The FNFP board had a very open discussion about what is going to work and how they are going to get the best value for dollars and bring the greatest reward to communities," Barbara Gray-Wiksten, of the B.C. Ministry of Forests Aboriginal Affairs Branch, says.
To ensure success at the community level and value for dollars, members of the Management Board weighed the cost and benefits of each project and are looking for considerable accountability from project proponents.

"There should be quite a bit of accountability and not funds just for funding's sake," Chief Nathan Matthew of the North Thompson Band, says. "For those that say -- 'We need $30,000 to get advice here.' -- well, we should see some sort of results from that before they receive additional funding."

And though the board recognizes there is risk involved with FNFP projects just as there is with all business ventures, by understanding the needs of First Nations communities and helping them to use their strengths as a business foundation, the First Nations Forestry Program is certain to nurture success.

Project List

Proponent	Community	Project Title	Total
Adams Lake Band	Chase	Natural Resource Project Manager	$41,240
B.C. Native Contractors Assoc.	Prince George	Developing the B.C. Native Contractors Association	50,000
Borland Creek Logging	Williams Lake	Logging and Commercial Thinning Training	22,000
Broman Lake Band	Decker Lake	Horse Logging and Log Building Skills Training	28,050
Coast Mountain Development Council	Anderson Lake	Community Forest Management - Implementation	16,750
Ditidaht Nation	Nitinat Lake	Forest Business Development	27,000
Edward, Robert	Keremeos	Development of a Business Plan for Blue Lumber Co	7,281
Ehattesaht Band	Campbell River	Shake & Shingle Mill Feasibility Study	25,000
Garbitt Wood Products	Chetwynd	Integrated Small Scale Forestry Training	49,474
Gwaii Wood Products Ltd.	Masset	Secondary Processing Kiln Drying Facility	50,000
Heiltsuk Nation	Bella Bella	Forest Resource Management Feasibility Study	25,000
Huu-Ay-Aht Nation	Bamfield	Forest Business Development Business Plan Development	22,500
Julian Contracting	Fort St. James	Training and Building a Mechanics Workshop	34,600
Kanaka Bar / Skuppah Bands	Lytton	Silviculture Training and Forest Management Plan	17,655
Kispiox Band	Hazelton	Kispiox Band Council Forestry Development	30,000
Kitasoo Band	Klemtu	Kitasoo Forestry Program	45,000
Kitimaat Village	Kitimat	Value-Added Forest Products	35,000
Lhoosk'uz Dene Forest Co.Ltd.	Quesnel	Operational and Business Plan Development	30,000
Lillooet Tribal Council	Lilloet	GIS Mapping and Training	36,356
Lower Kootenay Band	Creston	Planning for Forest- Guiding Territory Resources	30,000
Lower Nicola Band	Merritt	Inventory and Business Plan Development	25,000
Lower Similkameen Band	Princeton	Reserve Forest Management and Business Plan	20,000
McLeod Lake Band	McLeod Lake	McLeod Lake Indian Band Logging Processing Business Plan	8,100
Mt. Leighton Forestry Services Ltd.	Gold River	Training for Silviculture Workers	19,350
Musgamagw Tsawatainenk Tribal Council	Alert Bay	Hire two Forest Planners	42,000
Neskonlith Band	Chase	Value Added Mill Development Project	30,000
Nisga'a Tribal Council	Terrace	Silviculture Worker Training	25,200
Nlaka'pamux Tribal Council	Lytton	Nlaka'pamux Christmas Tree Study	25,000
Opetchesaht Band	Port Alberni	Spacing and Pruning Training	17,466
Oregon Jack Creek Band	Ashcroft	Study Joint Venture Partnership	20,000
Osoyoos Band	Osoyoos	Development and Specific Business Opportunity Feasibility Studies	35,775
Oweekeno Nation	Rivers Inlet	Oweekeno Forestry Program	45,000
Pierre/Alexander	Fort St. James	Pierre Trucking (Sole Proprietorship)	25,000
Queneesh Studios Inc.	Courtenay	Upgrade and Expand Value-Added Wood Products	50,000
Red Bluff Development Corp.	Quesnel	Operational Plan Development	49,875
Sechelt Band	Sechelt	Opportunity Identification and Business Development	25,000
Shxw'ow'hamel Nation	Hope	Business Plan Development - Debris Catchment	10,000
Siska & Cook's Ferry Bands	Lytton	Peyah Forest Products Joint Venture Start-Up	30,000
Skeetchestn Band	Savona	Woodlot Application	5,000
Teniye Logging Co.	100 Mile House	Commercial Thinning Training	11,150
Tsilhqot'in Nation	Williams Lake	Training for Silviculture Contractors and Supervisors	18,454
Uchucklesaht Band	Port Alberni	Uckucklesaht Forest Enterprises	49,752
Xeni Gwet'in Nation	Nemaiah Valley	Business Plan for Proposed Forest Licence	4,270
TOTAL			**$1,214,298**

Learning New Skills

Gazing out over the forest landscape that surrounds many of their communities, the leaders of First Nations communities know the forest of British Columbia holds opportunity for their people. But to secure those opportunities they realize that first they must become skilled in business and forestry operations.

Under the auspices of the First Nations Forestry Program (FNFP) those imperative business and technical skills are being imparted to First Nations communities.

"One of the things we hear over and over again from First Nations communities is 'Just give us the opportunity to learn something, give us the opportunity to try and we will attempt to make it succeed,'" FNFP British Columbia co-chair Elaine Teske says. As director of Marketing and Operations at the CFS Pacific Forestry Centre in Victoria, she has overall responsibility for managing the program in B.C. and considers the timing for the initiative could not have been better.

"Right now the situation is right in B.C. for First Nations people who are appropriately trained to find jobs," she says. Which is good news for First Nations leaders faced with high unemployment and previously limited opportunities for their communities.

"Instead of sitting back and watching all the logging trucks go by, lets hop on board and get out there and do the work," Chief Brian Williams of the Kispiox Indian Band says. "We can do all of the labour, but that is starting to get stale now. It is time that we get into the technical aspects of forestry."

As a B.C. board member of the FNFP Williams sees the program as a start towards that goal. In his seventh year as Kispiox Chief and with 15 years in business, Williams brings valuable administrative and business experience to the program board. Experience he hopes will benefit the process of economic building for First Nations communities.

"We're seeing a lot more people come forward saying 'What do we need to do to get further,'" Williams says. "And I think the FNFP is one of the opportunities that has come by at a most opportune time."

Our Spiritual Connection

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The Bridge is published by the Canadian Forest Service, 506 W. Burnside Rd. Victoria B.C. V8Z1M5, through the First Nations Forestry Program.

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As First Nations communities become increasingly involved in the forest industry through programs like the First Nations Forestry Program, they bring with them traditional values and perceptions that influence the nature of Canadian forestry.

"We care and share with the environment," says Earl Smith, FNFP board member in British Columbia and president of Hecate Logging in Black Creek. "We traditionally recognize that everything on this earth is interconnected with one and another." But Smith, a business man from B.C.'s Ehattesaht band who has spent his whole life in forestry, recognizes that to protect those values First Nations have to create wealth.

"That spiritualism is part of what we are," Gordon Prest, FNFP board member and First Nations coordinator with the University of British Columbia's faculty of forestry, says. "As First People we have always used the bounty of the land and sea, but in a very respectful way." But do not misunderstand Prest to be advocating preservation of every stand of trees.

"I don't see us sitting here saying we want to conserve and preserve everything. We always used the resources. We survived very comfortably on the land and the natural resources for thousands of years." Prest says. "What we want to do now is take our people into the 21st Century, but use the resource and land with respect as we did in the past."

Peter Alexcee

For management consultant Peter Alexcee, those traditional First Nations values go far beyond just influencing the way aboriginal peoples approach forestry.

"I have grown up listening to my elders, listening to what it is to be a First Nations people," Alexcee says. And having stood in the boardrooms and shop floors of multi-national corporations around the world, he considers those First Nations values to have a place in native and non-native businesses alike, whether in the forest sector or beyond.

And as Canadian forestry companies fight to protect their foreign markets in the face of increasing environmental pressure, following First Nations principles for the forest is increasingly becoming astute business practice.

"Whether it is interaction with people or interaction with the environment, there are some basic principles that go beyond culture," Alexcee says.

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